

# Engaging People, Linking the World –

## Broadband Planning Activities Update Report



The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. The update is focused around the three project areas – Capacity Building, Technical Assistance and Regional Planning.

### Capacity Building - \$715,538 Direct; \$885,417 Total

This project will benchmark technology use across relevant community sectors; set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and develop a plan for achieving its goals, with specific recommendations for web-based application development and demand creation. Projects include:

- **Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: Household Survey UNL.** Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future. *Status:* 6600 Nebraskans surveyed in February 2010 – 47% response rate. Survey results are available at [broadband.nebraska.gov](http://broadband.nebraska.gov). Follow-up survey will be conducted in 2014 that will over sample unserved or underserved populations that were identified in initial survey. [Quarter 1 2013 UNL Research Team met regularly to review initial survey questions to identify which questions to carry forward for comparison in follow-up survey as well as identifying additional questions to identify changes that have occurred. In addition, benchmarks were identified for each region to incorporate into the regional plans.](#)
- **Business Survey DED.** Businesses will be surveyed through the Business Retention and Expansion process to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. *Status:* Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Sixteen communities currently hold a license to input data in eSynchronist. [During Q1 explored how to strengthen this overall effort that identifies the broadband and technology needs of businesses. Broadband representatives will participate in the Nebraska Economic Development Association meeting in May 2013.](#)
- **Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs UNL.** In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. *Status:* Explore potential new effort to share information through Nebraska Library Commission. [Continue to explore opportunities to expand inventory. During Q2, efforts will be enhanced to identify technical expertise available in the libraries, community colleges, university and nonprofits. Technical assistance is critical to move broadband adoption forward.](#)
- **Focused Surveys UNL.** Focused surveys will be conducted in underserved areas including reservations, North and South Omaha, North Central Nebraska. In addition, limited monies are available to provide analysis of data for communities that wish to look further at their community. *Status:* [Through focused groups and working with regional groups, it has become apparent that more effort needs to be placed in the business community. During Q2 a plan will be developed to move this effort forward.](#)
- **Government and Economic Developer Survey UNL.** Surveys will gather information on access, adoption, usage and technical assistance needs of all county and community

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governments, chambers of commerce and economic developers, and explore technology usage. *Status:* Surveys conducted with Nebraska Economic Development Association, Nebraska Association of County Officials, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities. Surveys looked at how organizations are currently using technology and their perceptions. Resources, including people and money, are perceived as a challenge in further broadband adoption. Many have limited budgets to upgrade computers, training or purchasing high speed internet. Initial conversations at the League and NEDA statewide meetings, confirm importance of broadband. Best practices identified in NEDA survey include the importance of collaboration and setting priorities. NEDA also indicated a desire to meet with Public Service Commissioners. *In Q2 and Q3 2013, renewed efforts will be made to connect with the economic developers and county organizations. Representatives from the broadband planning groups will be in attendance the semi-annual NEDA conference and at NACO.*

- **Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative UNL.** Regional technology plans as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be created through project. *Status: During Q2, a promotional effort will be made to show the changes in broadband availability utilizing mapping data. An emphasis will be made to push people to the map to check speed.*

#### **Technical Assistance - \$1,064,471 Direct; \$1,193,068 Total**

The Nebraska Broadband Technical Assistance Program will provide technical assistance on supporting entrepreneurs through technology, and other topics to local governments, chambers of commerce, and economic developers especially in areas with lower than average broadband subscribership. Projects include:

- **Statewide Conference AIM Institute.** Conduct Statewide Conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Planning is underway for the 2013 Broadband Connecting Nebraska conference on October 16-17 in Kearney, Nebraska. An initial meeting with community leaders was held in Kearney during Q1, with numerous ideas and suggestions brought forward for topics and speakers. One conference keynote speaker, futurist Jack Uldrich, has been confirmed for the luncheon keynote on October 16. The conference facility (Younes Conference Center) has also been confirmed and a block of hotel rooms reserved.
- **Regional Workshops UNL.** Regional Workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status: Workshops will highlight the planning efforts and challenge participants to think about how broadband can be utilized to enhance their community and business. The format will be similar for all regions and offered at several locations across a region to touch as many participants as possible.*
- **Webinars UNL.** Up to four webinars will be held each year of the grant to address broadband adoption and utilization. *Status: Fourteen (14) webinars have been held since 4th quarter 2011. Participation in webinars have averaged 50 participants and follow-up viewings have ranged from 21-317. In 1st Quarter 2013, a series entitled "Don't Know What I Don't Know" focused on three areas – cloud computing, security and mobile. The interactive webinars have created an interest. During Q2 determining other topic areas and ways to strengthen the webinar series. Webinars are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/events>.*
- **Best Practice Videos UNL/AIM Institute.** At least 20 examples of best practices in expanding broadband adoption across Nebraska will be highlighted. *Status: 35 videos have now been launched through the broadband efforts. Views have ranged from a low of 3 to 153.*

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Efforts are underway to connect the videos to topical areas such as security to increase this awareness effort of what broadband can do. Best practice videos have highlighted the benefits of broadband technology. Businesses have connected to multiple business sites and clients to applying latest machine technology. During Q2 and Q3 will begin to explore how to share these information and powerful videos to a wider audience. Videos are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/videos> or visit the Youtube channel has been created to host the videos - <Http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska>.

- **Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS) DED.** An entrepreneurial mentoring program will focus on the human capital of the founders and their core teams that includes addressing how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the state. *Status:* The broadband component of this activity is complete.
- **Technical Assistance Expertise UNL/Steering Team.** The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurship to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. *Status:* Technical assistance expertise will be conducted as needs are identified. Technical assistance opportunities are being explored and will be introduced during Q2. A major effort will be made to connect with businesses.
- **Broadband Portal Development UNL.** Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska. *Status:* Website officially launched in April 2012. Since that time we have had 8,626 visits and 5,522 unique visitors with an average visit of 3:45. During the last quarter January 1-March 31, there were 1,868 visits and 1,271 unique visits with an average visit of 3:54. During Q2 2013, there will be additional marketing efforts to bring people to the site to view the map, videos and web.

#### **Local and Regional Planning - \$318,049 Direct; \$394,177 Total Budget**

The Nebraska Broadband Local/Regional Technology Planning Teams program will augment regional planning approaches identified in the initial grant application with community planning, business and entrepreneurial discussions, government discussions, and agricultural discussions. Activities include:

- **Regional Planning Teams UNL.** Regional planning teams will be formed to create the regional plans. *Status:* Planning team members continue to be at varying stages as they move forward with broadband plans. The draft regional broadband plans will be completed the end of April and made available at the broadband website for feedback. Four focus groups were held in the SW Region with twenty-five attending. The discussion will influence the regional planning report. The information varied across the region but not a lot. The big thing across the region was to keep growing and improving what we have. Also, that it is no longer a want but a NEED. We NEED high speed to get and keep business in the area for everyone from farmers to higher education and everyone in between. Learned challenges of many rural participants who have inadequate service and paying nearly \$100.00 or month through satellite. And, then they are being capped and unable to have access within the first week of a monthly service.
- **Community Planning – North and South Omaha UNL/AIM Institute in North and South Omaha.** North and South Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. *Status:* Several meetings with community leaders in north and south Omaha were held during Q1 in conjunction with the project's strategic planning initiative in these communities. These areas were identified because they include

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some of the lowest broadband adoption rates in Nebraska. Broadband services are available in these communities, although cost is a consideration. A primary concern that has been expressed is a significant need for basic training programs in the use of computers and broadband services. Plans for Q2 include continued conversations with community leaders and identification of actionable strategies for addressing key concerns.

- **Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities UNL.** Additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. *Status:* During Q4, the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) launched its radio station. Currently they are focused on moving the radio station to online which is increasing interest in broadband for the community.
- **Focus Groups UNL.** Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates. *Status:* Four focus groups were held in the Southwest Region during Q1. An additional 4 focus groups were held the beginning of Q2 in the Panhandle. Access continues to be a challenge in a number of areas. Where there is access, communities are interested in exploring ways to increase utilization. Where there is limited access or reliability, the conversation has focused on what a community needs to do to increase broadband.
- **Community Sector Discussions UNL.** Community sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals. *Status:* The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL. Reaching out to community sector groups such as Agriculture. Workshop on broadband planning efforts will be held at annual NE Ag Technology Association meeting. In addition, 27 Nebraska LEAD participants learned about the Broadband Mapping and Planning Initiative during their Western Nebraska tour in Scottsbluff.

#### **Project Partner Steering Team:**

AIM Institute, Rod Armstrong and Tamara Cass  
State of Nebraska

Nebraska Department of Economic Development – Allison Hatch and Tim O'Brien  
Nebraska Information Technology Commission – Anne Byers

University of Nebraska Lincoln

Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI) – Charlotte Narjes and Becky Vogt  
Extension – Connie Hancock  
Communications Specialist – Jan Cejka, UNL CARI

For more information, contact Charlotte Narjes at [cnarjes@unl.edu](mailto:cnarjes@unl.edu) or Connie Hancock at [chancock1@unl.edu](mailto:chancock1@unl.edu).

